

Military drone competition to feature UMES engineering students



University of Maryland Eastern Shore engineering students have earned a spot to compete against 10 other schools in the inaugural HBCU/MI Design Competition sponsored by the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (CCDC) later this month.

The team includes four seniors, three of whom currently are employed ahead of graduation: **Kyle Baumann** (Hardwire - Pocomoke City), **Robert Perez** (Naval Air Systems Command - southern Maryland) and **Ethan Hitch** (Northrup Grumman - Wallops Island, Va.). Aerospace engineering seniors **Crista Campbell**, certified pilot **Scott Hogan** and

pilot coach Edward Brink round out the team.

Dr. Payam Matin, an engineering professor, said the students answered a call this past fall for proposals to design drones capable of addressing the following challenges: eliminating wire bundles in an innovative way in small drones and seeking a way to replace unmanned aerial vehicle parts with biologically-based materials.

The UMES team received an \$8,000 grant to underwrite the cost to build the "quad-copter" (four propellers) and travel to the competition that will be held at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The national competition is a component of the CCDC's commitment to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-serving Institutions.

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"We are proud to host the inaugural HBCU/MI Design Competition and garner insight from our nation's future innovators," said Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins, CCDC commander.

"This would be impossible without my UMES education," Perez said. "Participating as a member of this team allows our work to be recognized outside of the classroom."

Campbell expressed surprise when told the

team would be participating in the inaugural competition. "It's great to be a part of this cool project and seeing the practices in class applied to testing the operation of the prototype," she said.

The team's solutions to the proposed challenges will be evaluated and their drone will fly in the Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso. A panel of judges will evaluate each entry based

on "the ability to describe their solution, how the prototype addresses the challenges, success of demonstration, and how the prototype could be commercialized for Army use," according to CCDC officials.

"I am very excited to see them compete against their peers," Dr. Matin said. "This is a great opportunity (that) will help them grow."

The competition takes place April 23 and 24.